

historical novel

Fighting Rivers

Historical novel. Ripol Classic. Moscow 2023. 684 pages

Russia at the beginning of the 20th century is a rapidly developing country with a huge advanced river fleet, almost entirely in private hands. This entire complex economic mas-sif was practically blown up by the tragedy of 1917. Not only smaller armored personnel carriers and armored trains fight in the civil war, but also armed ships: tugboats that have been converted into gunboats; ships of the line used as transport ships; barges converted into floating battle batteries. Then in 1918 these river fleets were confiscated by the „constituents“ in Samara, by Trotsky in Nizhny Novgorod, by the rebels in Izhevsk, by the Chekists in Perm.

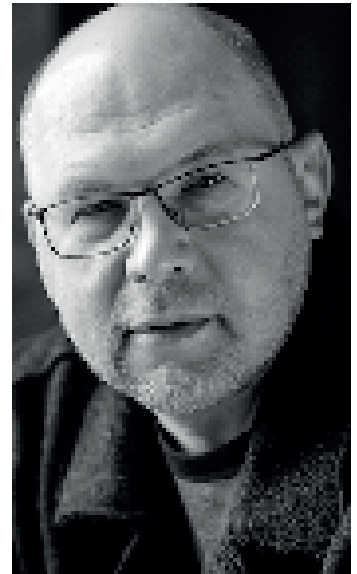
A technical revolution is also raging in the world as steam engines begin to compete with diesel engines. The Russian confrontation between the Reds and Whites is permeated by a fierce struggle between the leaders of oil production - the British concern Shell and the Russian company of the Nobel brothers. War is being waged by people, technology and capital. In the bloody and burning storm, the river boatmen are sometimes on the side of the Reds, sometimes on the side of the Whites, and are forced to shoot at those who are actually comrades in the real main occupation of their lives. They must sink steamers - glory and pride of river navigation. How does one maintain a moral conscience in the midst of such a catastrophe? How do you save those you love, who have confided in you? How to protect progress indifferent to social struggles? There, on the decks of the river steamers, the captains search for an honest path to the future. There the so-called little man shows greater strength than his huge and mighty ship.

The main plot happens within one and a half years only, during the odyssey of the smuggler „Levshino“, who in the battles on the Kama River in 1918-1919 has enough time to fight for the Reds, the Whites, the Greens and for himself. Everything begins in Perm, everything will end in Perm. On the one hand brother against brother, neighbor against neighbor. On the other hand, society is extremely atomized, guild and friendship ties make every effort, but there is no longer any class or regional solidarity between people. And in fact nobody has any ideology. Those who went to war voluntarily fight either because war can bring glory and career prospects, or because there can be looting and killing. The rest, including many military leaders, fight simply because of the circumstances: they were mobilized, ordered to command the fleet, and sent to the front with their ship. The population is not completely mute, they scold, but are weak-willed.

A novel about a seemingly distant war. But under the magnifying glass of Ivanov's prose we see a truth hidden deep within that extends to contemporary Russia.

“What amazes is the ease with which these almost seven hundred pages fly by. This novel is one of those when readers say: I opened it, did not have time to blink an eye, and immediately found myself on page three hundred. And then immediately on seven hundred.” FONTANKA

Aleksei Ivanov was born in 1969 in Gorky (today Nizhny Novgorod). He grew up in Perm in the Urals. In 1996 he graduated from the University of Ekaterinburg with a degree in art history. He then worked as a caretaker, laboratory assistant, tourist guide, teacher, journalist and lecturer. His first publication in a magazine in 1990 was a fantasy novel. His first book publication was the mystical-historical novel „Heart of Parma“ 2003. 11 novels and 7 non-fiction books by him are now available with a total circulation of over 1.5 million. 5 books have been filmed, 5 more are currently being filmed. Aleksei Ivanov lives in Perm.



THE AUTHOR

languages

8 languages

awards

2021 audiobook of the Year
 2006 Yasnaya Polyana Award
 2006 Big Book Award
 2006 Strannik Prize
 2004 Book of the Year
 2004 Bazhov Award
 2003 Mamin-Sibiriyak Award

Aleksei Ivanov

historical novel

Synopsis

Despite the outwardly cruelty of the novel, it is full of emotions and human experiences. Partly because of this, but also because of the volume, the number of characters, the appeal of historical figures from Admiral Kolchak to Larisa Reisner, the novel inevitably begs to be compared to „War and Peace“ and „The Quiet Don“. Surely there will be readers who will flip through „Peace and Love“ and readers who will rush to get through „War and Battles“ as quickly as possible. Only neither Tolstoy nor Sholokhov had such fabulous descriptions of steel colossuses, their engines, their movement through the water. There was no admiration for the entrepreneurs of that time. Progress is not technology, progress is a state of mind. It doesn't work without people - without entrepreneurs, engineers and inventors and also not without those who work with the machines - like Ivan Nerechтин, and those who care about the safety of technology - like Khamzat Mammadov. And not without those who are willing to give their lives so that the world can go on and their loved ones can go on. Because progress, as Ivanov writes, is belief in the future.

First, the Bolsheviks take Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovich from the Perm Hotel, where he is serving his exile, and have him shot. But the execution is carried out in a very bungling manner, the emperor survives and now has to leave Perm urgently.

Second, proto-frontwoman Laris Reisner dreams of making history as the Valkyrie of the Revolution, throwing herself into the spectacle of military operations for fame and adventure.

Third, Muslim superman Mamedov, the Nobel family's personal goon, tries to save the Swedish oil tycoons' business in Russia.

Fourth, young Alyosha dreams of technological advances and becoming the new Shukhov.

Fifth, the most experienced, but endowed with a bad character, river captain Ivan Nerechтин, has no ambitions of his own, but only does his duty and tries to save people close to him.

Sixth, the veteran of Tsushima and Moonsund, Admiral Stark, does not want to fight a general battle, for the war on the river is not a battle at sea where ship is against ship. In the war on the rivers everything gets mixed up: chases, skirmishes, battles on land and sea and even a little in the air.

Seventh, Dmitry Yakutov, a great steamer owner nicknamed "Lord of Kama", immediately grasps what is to come and shoots himself to the heart from the very beginning of the war and the book. He'll miss all the fun. The way the author presents us with this no less carefully described character to have him shot almost immediately evokes a sense of startled excitement in the reader.

Eighth, however, his daughter becomes the female protagonist of the novel.

Ninth, Goretsky dreams of a warm place in some branch of an international oil company and is ready for any meanness.

Tenth, the Rothschilds decide to expel the Nobels from Russia.

"Ivanov is an engineer of literature, a mechanic of historical science. The heroes of his prose are always part of a great historical machine. Ivanov opens the outer shell, shows readers how this mechanism works, which gear rotates faster and which fails, which screw is more important, which handle allows the machine to move in the other direction and why it stalls." GORKY MEDIA

Aleksei Ivanov